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12/11/2013 Minutes

VISION 2020 STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES OF DECEMBER 11, 2013 MEETING

Present: Kathleen Bodie, Carolina Buitrago, Andrew Fischer, Bruce Fitzsimmons, Danuta Forbes, Heather Hill, Mary Harrison, Jane Howard, Josh Lobel, Brucie Moulton, Miriam Stein, Mike Stern. **Absent:** Adria Arch, Brad Barber, Claire Carswell, Adam Chapdelaine, Joe Connolly, Dan Dunn, Joey Glushko, Leba Heigham, Gordon Jamieson, Elizabeth Karpati, John Leone, Gail McCormick, Cheryl Miller, Angela Olszewski, Steve Ricci, David White.

- The November minutes were accepted as written.
- Mike Stern presented his working group's observations about the need to revitalize the Education Task Group and the benefits the group could bring to the town and to Vision 2020. Key points included establishing a best practice memorandum for school advisory councils to standardize operation; assisting with communication of school information to parents and the community, perhaps by acting as a clearinghouse for school information; assisting with finding parent volunteers to teach enrichment classes such as the before school math class at Brackett and finding interns to help teachers meet their goals; creating a formula to predict significant changes in enrollment; including more education questions on the town survey.
Superintendent Bodie agreed that there is "information deficit" about the schools and a need for improved communication of information about the schools. She detailed a number of challenges the schools are facing, in particular the condition of the high school physical plant and the need to meet current code requirements for room size of science labs and other classrooms. She noted that because of the need to meet code, the high school buildings do not have enough space to allow a renovation-only option working within the existing configuration. . She said the high school should be the "crown jewel of the [APS] system," and accomplishment of that goal will require community support and action. She reported that she and the Arlington Public Schools' CFO are drafting a "Statement of Interest" (SOI) regarding the high school renovation/rebuild to be submitted to the Massachusetts State Building Authority in early April 2014. ~Arlington will know by the fall if it will be invited into the "Eligibility Period," a 270-day period during which Town Meeting would have to vote on the money for a feasibility study. ~If all goes well, the project will then enter the Schematic Phase. While Thompson school was built in 18 months, it could take 3 years for the high school. ~
Another challenge is the growth in enrollments and its impact on the middle and high schools in years to come. Also challenging is the problem of dealing with increasing enrollments in a time of fiscal constraint. Supt. Bodie said a revitalized Education Task Group could best assist the schools by focusing on communication, ideas for resolving budget issues in the face of rising enrollment, and helping inform the public about the need for a new high school. The Committee voted unanimously to revitalize this Task Group, and Mike Stern agreed to chair the group.
- Spy Pond Committee will develop a Warrant Article for water bodies and will present it at the January meeting.
- Miriam Stein expressed a concern that townspeople are confusing the town's goals with the goals set forth in the master plan. The plan did not include communication, diversity, or education goals. There is a question whether there should be a working group looking at the discrepancy between the sets of goals. Mary Harrison said an article describing 2013 survey results for participation in town questions will be published in the Advocate next week along with a sidebar displaying the nine town goals. This should help clarify what the town goals are.
- Brucie Moulton said that she and Mary will step down as Standing Committee co-chairs at the end of July 2014. Consequently the January meeting will focus on re-envisioning Vision2020 and planning for succession. That meeting will look at strengths of Vision 2020, new approaches to organizing and carrying out Vision 2020's work, criteria task groups use to select topics for each year's work, what leadership will look like going forward. It is important that Standing Committee members attend the January meeting

The meeting ran approximately from 7:30 to 10:15 p.m.

As amended 1-9-14